

ABSTRACT

An information distribution system encodes a first set of digital data on a plurality of portable read-only storage devices. Additional information is stored in a database that is accessible by using a bi-directional channel. The first set of digital data contains a plurality of special displayable terms, a first non-displayable symbol, a plurality of linkage references, and a second non-displayable symbol. A user can select at least one special displayable term. The linking reference associated with the selected special displayable term is sent to the database via the bi-directional channel. The database uses the linking reference to search for information, and returns the resulting information to the user.